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19
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MYSTIC
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THUS FAR IN MYSTIC

CIRESS

is a world where daily life revolves around magic: from the water nymphs in the plumbing system, to the short-order shamans conjuring hot lunches downtown, to the will-o'-the-wisps that light the highways at night. Presiding over this enchanted globe are the seven major Guilds of magic, which have ruled Ciress for centuries. Their key to prosperity was the fact that each Guild Master housed within him or herself the eternal spirit of their Guild's founding Master, from whom they gained timeless wisdom and sorcerous knowledge.

All of that changed on the day **Genevieve Villard** became Master of the Nouveau Guild. At her Rite of Ascension, a mysterious stranger imprinted a powerful sigil on the palm of Gen's rebellious younger sister, **Giselle.** The sigil somehow forced the eternal spirits of all seven Guilds out of the Masters and into Giselle! Granted vast magical might, Giselle reluctantly became the most powerful Mystic her world has ever known.

RECENTLY

The duplicitous **Darrow** has freed the Demon Queen, **Animora,** from her imprisonment on the astral plane. Returning to Ciress with more power than ever, the evil demigoddess is unleashing a mysterious plan to avenge her previous defeat at Giselle's hands...

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BLESSED BE, GREAT ORACLE. MY APOLOGIES FOR DISTURBING YOU LIKE THIS, BUT YOUR GUIDANCE IS SORELY NEEDED.
THE MASTER OF ENCHANTRESS GUILD, APOLOGIZE TO ME?
NO, THAT WON'T DO. FOR ANSWERS TRUE ARE WHAT I'VE PLEDGED TO THEE.
ON YOUR BEHALF I'LL GLADLY PART THE VEIL THAT HIDES TOMORROW...
BEWARE, YINMA. FOR ALL I SEE IS DEATH AND LOSS AND SORROW!
THE ANCIENT FOE WE THOUGHT BROUGHT LOW! I FEEL HER EVIL SENTIENCE!
HER REBORN POWER SPEEDS THE HOUR OF LONG DESIRED VENGEANCE!
SKRIK

⇒ACK⇐
ORACLE!

MASTER! WHAT IS THIS?
THE LAST THING YOU WILL EVER SEE IF YOU DON'T MOVE FAST!

WE ARE GOING TO NEED HELP! BUT MY DUTY IS TO STAND AND FIGHT...
YOU TAKE THIS TO THE NOUVEAU MASTER. IT HAS AN ENTRY GLYPH THAT WILL GUIDE YOU STRAIGHT TO HER.

HURRY! OR THERE MIGHT BE NOTHING LEFT TO SAVE!

...SURVIVORS FROM THE ENCHANTRESS CATHEDRAL SAID THE TENTACLES SHED SPECIAL *SCALES*--
--AND THAT THOSE SCALES SPROUTED UP INTO SEPARATE *CREATURES* THE MOMENT THEY FELL TO THE GROUND.
LIKE PLANTING *DRAGON'S TEETH*.
EXACTLY. I HAVE TWO DIVISIONS OF SCRY-CORPS WORKING ON A *COUNTER-SPELL*. NO JOY SO FAR...
MEANWHILE, SIMILAR INCURSIONS HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN *OTHER* GUILD LANDS, MOVING *UP* STEADILY FROM THE SOUTHERN LATITUDES.
THE SCALE-BEASTS HAVE MARCHED RIGHT THROUGH *EVERYTHING* THROWN AT THEM--THE DJINN ROC BOMBER WING, THE SHAMAN SPIRIT-DRUMMERS, THE TANTRIC CHI-CASTERS--
ARE YOU SUGGESTING WE CAN'T WIN, GENERAL LAURANCE?
YOU CAN SEE CLEARLY ENOUGH *WHO* WE'RE UP AGAINST, AND WE'VE BEATEN HER BEFORE...

IF YOU'RE IMPLYING THIS IS ANIMORA'S WORK, THEN I MUST HAVE MISSED A BRIEFING.
...BECAUSE YOU AND THE OTHER GUILD MASTERS ASSURED US SHE'S IN CUSTODY ON THE SPIRIT PLANE. CORRECT?
YES...WELL, APPARENTLY NOT.
NOW, WHAT ABOUT MY SISTER? HAVE YOUR MEN BROUGHT HER IN AS REQUESTED?
DON'T WORRY, THEY HAVE HER APARTMENT BUILDING SECURED. BUT YOU DON'T NEED HER DISTRACTING YOU RIGHT NOW.
DO NOT SECOND-GUESS ME! SOMEBODY BRING ME A PHONE!
MASTER VILLARD! STAY BEHIND—
STAND DOWN, JACQUES. SEE THAT GLYPH? IT'S THE HOTLINE SCROLL I GAVE TO MASTER YINMA.
GENEVIEVE VILLARD, MASTER OF THE NOUVEAU GUILD! THE DEMON QUEEN HAS RETURNED!
YOUR SISTER MUST KNOW HOW ANIMORA ESCAPED! ENLIST HER AID!
NOT AGAIN WITH YOUR SISTER! WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, HOW COULD A DEBUTANTE BE OF ANY USE TO US AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
LONG STORY. THE IMPORTANT THING RIGHT NOW IS THAT IT'S ONE-THIRTY IN THE AFTERNOON...
...SO THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE GISELLE COULD BE...

RING RING
Hey!
...huh...?
It's about TIME, sleeping beauty! I was beginning to think I'd have to take MYSELF for a walk...
...only YOU tell me how I'm supposed to hold my own LEASH...!
YEAH, OKAY. LEMME GET DRESSED.
Mm...STILL CAN'T BELIEVE, AFTER EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED BETWEEN US LAST NIGHT, HE DIDN'T ASK ME TO STAY OVER.
YOU DON'T THINK THERE'S SOMETHING *WRONG* WITH HIM, DO YOU?
Who, THIERRY? Not unless being a GENTLEMAN counts as something wrong nowadays.
RING RING
RING RING
Or haven't you ever MET a gentleman?
...NG RING
Y'know, they even do things like CALL the next day...
GISELLE!
WH...?
COME TO US! NOW!

SAYING "PLEASE" NOW AND THEN WOULD BE--
WE SHOULD HAVE COMMUNED WITH YOU THE INSTANT HE ARRIVED.
HE WHO?! ARRIVED WHERE?
HERE. THE SPIRIT PLANE. IT WAS DARROW.
Um...DIDN'T I SORT OF SHRIVEL DARROW..?
SOMEHOW, HE RECOVERED AFTER YOU DRAINED HIS ENERGIES. THEN HE STOLE IN HERE WITHOUT YOUR KNOWING.
BUT, HOW? DON'T YOU GUYS LIVE INSIDE MY HEAD?
DON'T BE SUCH A DOLT! THE SPIRIT PLANE IS EVERYWHERE AND NO PLACE! AND THERE ARE MANY WAYS IN!
Uh-oh. I THINK I JUST FIGURED OUT THE PUNCHLINE...

...WHERE'S ANIMORA?
DARROW VEILED HIS TREACHERY ALL TOO WELL.
WITH A KISS, HE SLIPPED HER SOME KIND OF ENERGY PILL.
AFTER THAT, SHE WAS TOO MUCH FOR US TO CONTAIN.
SHE RIPPED THROUGH US LIKE A LIONESS! WE SIGNALED YOU AS SOON AS WE RECOVERED, BUT...
...SURELY ALL OF CIRESS KNOWS BY NOW THAT THE BEAST HAS RETURNED?!
I'M, uh, NOT SURE... BUT I'LL FIND OUT! JUST KEEP TALKING TO ME...

I'M GONNA NEED ALL THE *HELP* I CAN GET!

You ain't kiddin', sister

I KNEW we shouldn't've missed "Nouveau Newsbreak." This looks like it's been goin' on ALL DAY!

IN JUST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, THE MONSTERS HAVE CLAIMED THE ENCHANTRESS, SHAMAN AND TANTRIC LANDS

WE FINALLY HAVE FOOTAGE IN FROM THE **SHAMAN LANDS** OF SOME OF THE **CREATURES** ACTUALLY BEING **CREATED**

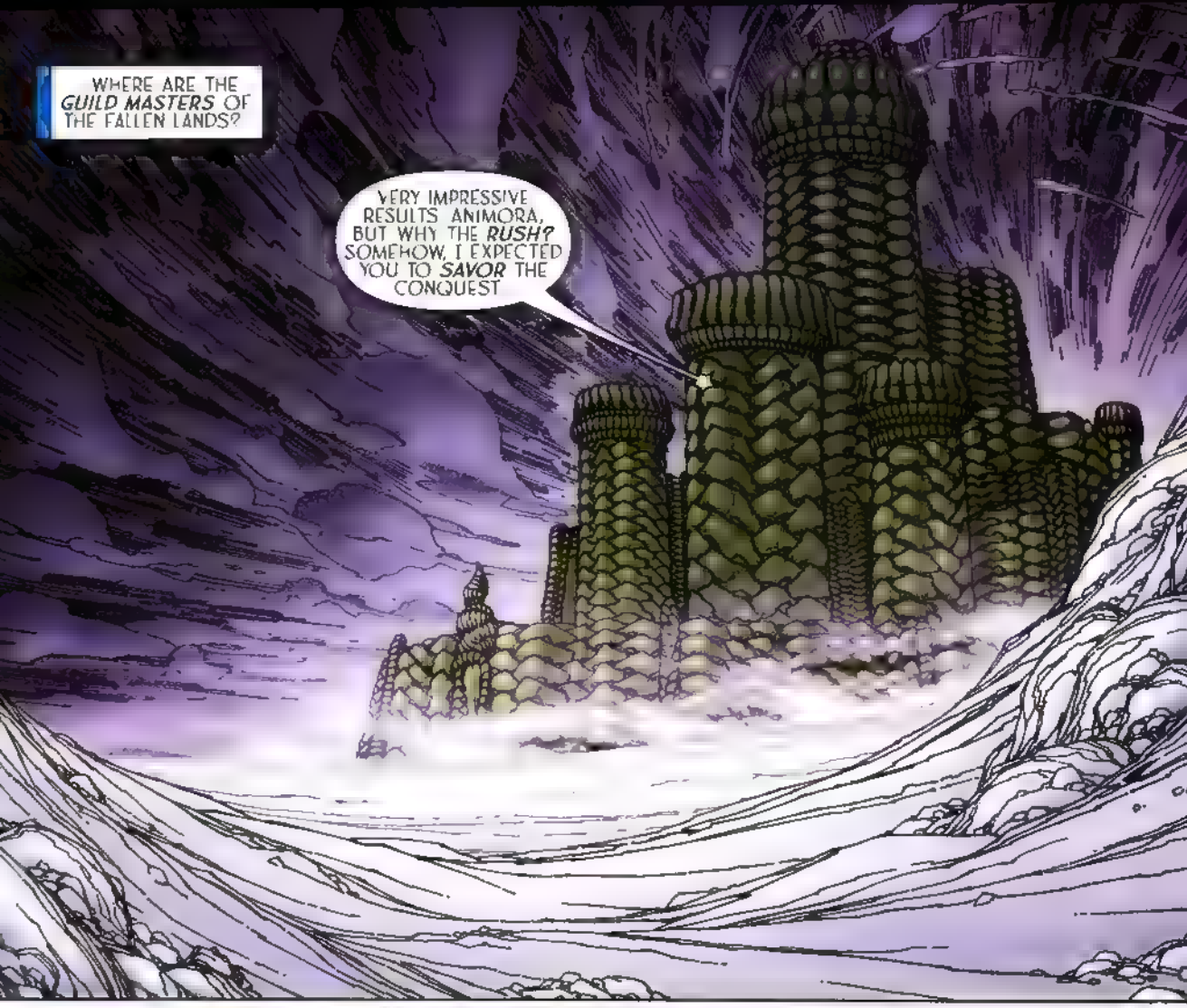
EACH TIME, IT BEGAN WITH TENTACLES **SPROUTING** FROM BENEATH THE LOCAL GUILD CATHEDRAL, THEN **SHEDDING** GIANT SCALES EVERYWHERE.

...WHICH GREW INTO A FANTASTIC VARIETY OF GIANT BEASTS THAT MARCHED OUT ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE

SINCE THEN, THE CREATURES HAVE UNITED AND OVERRUN THE ASTRAL AND DARK MAGI ARMIES.

THEY ARE EXPECTED TO REACH THE NOUVEAU FRONTIER THIS EVENING

BUT THE **BIG QUESTION** REMAINS


WHERE ARE THE GUILD MASTERS OF THE FALLEN LANDS?
VERY IMPRESSIVE RESULTS ANIMORA, BUT WHY THE RUSH? SOMEHOW, I EXPECTED YOU TO SAVOR THE CONQUEST

WHY BOTHER? THIS WORLD MAY BE A RICH LITTLE MORSEL, BUT IT S STILL JUST THE APPETIZER

HOME IS THE MAIN COURSE, DARROW BEAUTIFUL ELYSIA
MARK MY WORDS INGRAS VAUNTED RAGE WILL TURN TO TERROR WHEN I SNATCH OUR BIRTH WORLD FROM HER GRASP
TERROR, eh? NO OFFENSE, ANIMORA BUT YOU LOOKED MUCH MORE FRIGHTENING BEFORE
DON'T BE COY YOU PREFERRED ME ALL FANGS AND SCALES
GET OVER IT THE GORGON LOOK WAS NEVER REALLY ME AT ALL
WITH INGRAS CURSE OUT OF MY SYSTEM, I'M AFRAID YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO SETTLE FOR MY ORIGINAL FACE, AND KISS MY ORIGINAL
FEET
NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO CONCENTRATE ON MY FUN AT LEAST UNTIL A CERTAIN SOMEONE FINALLY TAKES UP MY INVITATION TO COME OUT AND PLAY

ARGUS ONE TO NOUVEAU LINE COMMAND! APPROACHING ENEMY FRONT! DO YOU COPY?
ROGER THAT, ARGUS
TROOPS ARE STANDING BY HOW MANY UNITS SHOULD WE ACTIVATE, OVER?
ALL OF THEM!
REPEAT, COMMIT ALL FORCES!
AND THEN SEE IF YOU CAN CONJURE UP MORE ..!

UNDERSTOOD, ARGUS. RETURN TO BASE
THE ARMY CORPS OF WARLOCKS IS RAISING OUR FRONTLINE GOLEMS RIGHT NOW
...AIR SUPPORT'S ON ITS WAY, TOO.
LACEWING BOMBARDIERS REPORTING IN! READY TO COMMENCE ATTACK RUN!
LACEWINGS ARE GO!

WE'RE HARDLY SLOWING THEM DOWN

GENERAL CLEMENT, INFORM THE ACOLYTES IT'S TIME TO ACTIVATE THE *COLOSSI*

AYE MASTER VILLARD

GISELLE WHERE *ARE* YOU...?

BRACE YOURSELVES, GENTLEMEN
KREEEE
NOW, OPEN A LINE TO THE OTHERS!
AYE, MASTER VILLARD! GO AHEAD
ARMIES OF THE NOUVEAU LANDS!
STAND FAST AND FIGHT!

FIGHT! FOR YOUR WAY OF LIFE! FOR YOUR HOMES AND FAMILIES!
HOLD THE LINE!
DAMMIT
WHERE IS SHE...?
YOU! MASTERS OF NOTHING!
I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU WORMS TO DELIVER!

ONWARD!
MASTER! SOMEONE S TELEPORTING IN!
MMMM
FINALLY! IT S OKAY! IT S ONLY MY SIS
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET HER ATTENTION? WHY DOES SHE NOT SHOW HER FACE?!

HER ?
WHO DO YOU
Oh NO
Don't give up now, sweet thing. The party's just startin'!
SKITTER?!
BUT IF YOU'RE HERE, THEN
That's RIGHT
WAM

"...she's fashionably LATE again!"

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Giselle

Fan artist David Morán has an interesting hobby. He takes photographs of models from a variety of sources and enhances them through Adobe® Photoshop® to produce unique fan pieces depicting his favorite characters. After buying the MYSTIC trade paperback, he decided to try his luck with Giselle, CrossGen's favorite sorceress. This piece first caught our eye when WizardWorld.com posted it online. If you enjoyed David's version of Giselle, feel free to check out more of his artwork at www.geocities.com/davidjosemoran.

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